

National Assessment of Educational Progress (CFDA No. 84.999F, 84.999G)

I. Legislation

Section 411 of the National Education Statistics Act of 1994, 20 U.S.C 9010 authorizes national and state assessments under the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 1996, 1997, and 1998 (expires in 1998).

Section 412, of the act of 1994, 20 U.S.C 9011 authorizes the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which provides policy guidance for the execution of NAEP.

In 1994, the Advisory Council on Education Statistics (ACES) was established by Section 407 of the act to review general policy of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and advise the commissioner and the NAGB on technical and statistical matters related to the NAEP.

II. Funding History

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation</u>
1991	\$19,211,000
1992	29,900,000
1993	29,262,000
1994	29,262,000
1995	32,757,000
1996	39,623,000

III. Analysis of Program Performance

A. Goals and Objectives

NAEP, which measures and reports the status and trends in student learning over time, subject by subject, is the only nationally representative assessment of what American students know and can do. Nationally representative assessment data must be collected and reported at least once every two years in grades 4, 8, and 12 in the nation's public and private schools. Assessments of state-representative samples of students are also authorized and regularly conducted in states wishing to participate. States bear the costs of collecting data for state-level assessments. Ongoing evaluation of the NAEP is required.

Beginning in 1996, NAEP is to be conducted every year. Subjects have included reading, writing, civics, U.S. history, mathematics, science, and world geography. NAEP has been designed to produce a representative sample of students at the national level. In each of the 1990, 1994, and 1996 assessments, data were collected from a national probability sample of over 45,000 students per age/grade or a total of about 146,000 students in nearly 2,100 schools. In addition, approximately 110,000 students per grade, or 2,500 students per state are assessed in each state assessment.

B. Strategies to Achieve the Goals

Services Supported

National NAEP

NAEP does not report individual scores. Instead, through matrix sampling, different portions of the total pool of cognitive questions are put into booklets and administered to different but equivalent samples of students. Blocks of background questions are the same for every student in the same grade for the same subject, but the blocks of cognitive questions vary according to the booklet version.

Main assessments. NAEP assessments measure students' achievement in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and other subjects. These assessments are administered in grades 4, 8, and 12 and are designed to follow the curriculum frameworks developed by NAGB.

Long-term trend. Certain assessments must remain stable over time so that changes in student achievement can be examined longitudinally. NAEP accomplishes this by administering identical instruments from one assessment cycle to the next. Beginning in 1999, this administration will be conducted every four years.

Background questionnaires. NAEP collects data from students, their teachers, and their principals that relate to students' school backgrounds and educational activities. This information is related to students' performance on the cognitive portions of the assessments to provide the context for a better understanding of student achievement.

State NAEP

Until 1990, NAEP was a national assessment only. In 1988, Congress authorized a voluntary trial state assessment. In 1994, Congress amended the statute to eliminate the "trial" reference and established that these tests be conducted on a developmental basis. In 1996, 47 states participated.

NAEP Redesign

NAGB believes that the redesign of NAEP (beginning in the year 2000) should accomplish the following objectives:

- To measure national and state progress toward the third National Education Goal and provide timely, fair, and accurate data about student achievement at the national level, among the states, and in comparison with other nations.
- To develop, through a national consensus, sound assessments to measure what students know and can do as well as what students should know and be able to do.
- To help states and others link their assessments with the NAEP and use national assessment data to improve educational performance.

C. Program Performance—Indicators of Impact and Effectiveness

Indicators are under development.

IV. Planned Studies

NAEP Evaluation

By law, NAEP is required to provide for the continuing review of the national and state assessments. Starting in 1989, a contract with the Center on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST), in conjunction with the University of Colorado at Boulder and the Rand Corporation, established the Technical Review Panel to produce a series of studies on the validity of NAEP. In 1995, the NAEP Validation Studies (NVS) Panel was formed to work on validation studies as well. A third panel was formed to independently evaluate state NAEP via a grant to the National Academy of Education. Reports from these panels have been completed. The final report of the National Academy of Education, the “Capstone Report,” was released in April 1997.

In 1996 the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) was awarded a contract to continue evaluation. Thus far, NAS has produced a letter report to the Secretary in response to the proposed NAEP redesign, recommending that: the National Assessment Governing Board and the U.S. Department of Education consider the NAGB redesign proposal as a range of possible interim measures to alleviate some of the immediate pressures on NAEP while undertaking a more fundamental rethinking of NAEP’s goals and character (V.1)

In 1996, Peat Marwick, through a contract with NCES and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, conducted a review of the following areas of NAEP:

- Management of multiple cooperative agreements,
- Cost allocation and cost tracking,
- Decision making, and
- Technical approach.

The study *A Review of the National Assessment of Educational Progress: Management and Methodological Practices* (V.2) concluded with many recommendations for each of the areas just listed including the following:

- Strategic planning processes should be established.
- NCES should structure cooperative agreements to give grantees incentives to improve efficiency and control costs, and strategic planning should produce a product that clearly guides grantees to focus efforts.
- NAEP’s use of consensus process slows the speed of decision making, and status reporting has not been timely. Operations management plans and schedules should be established, and grantees should be required to regularly report status of project against plan.
- NCES and NAGB should clarify plans, priorities, deliverables, and schedules for serving the highest-priority customers identified in the strategic planning process.

Many of the suggested improvements are now being implemented.

V. Sources of Information

1. Evaluation of “Redesigning the National Assessment of Educational Progress,” National Research Council (September 1996).
2. A Review of the National Assessment of Educational Progress: Management and Methodological Procedures, KPMG Peat Marwick LLP and Mathtech Inc. (June 1996).
3. Program files.

VI. Contacts for Further Information

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